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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 13 December 1996, the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/150, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", in which it, inter alia, stressed the importance of the work done by the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories and of the steps taken under the auspices of the Secretary-General to ensure the achievement of a coordinated mechanism for United Nations activities throughout the occupied territories; urged Member States, international financial institutions of the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and regional and interregional organizations to extend, as rapidly and as generously as possible, economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people in order to assist in the development of the West Bank and Gaza, and to do so in close cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization and through official Palestinian institutions; called upon the international donor community to expedite the delivery of pledged assistance to the Palestinian people to meet their urgent needs; and requested that the Secretary-General submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the resolution, containing: (a) an assessment of the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people; and (b) an assessment of the needs still unmet and specific proposals for responding effectively to them.

2. Mr. Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, the Representative of the Secretary-General to the Security Council from 1993 to 1996 and the Representative of the Secretary-General to the multilateral peace talks on the Middle East since January 1993, succeeded Mr. Terje Rød-Larsen of Norway as Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories in February 1997. Concurrently, Mr. Gharekhan also serves as the Representative of the Secretary-General to the multilateral peace talks on the Middle East, a position he has held since January 1993. In his previous report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/51/171-E/1996/75), the Secretary-General provided an overview of the period from June 1995 until May 1996. The present report covers the period from June 1996 through May 1997.

3. Throughout the period under review, the Special Coordinator focused his efforts on:

(a) Coordinating and targeting donor-funded projects in order to alleviate unemployment and related socio-economic hardship and to encourage employment generation through the implementation of needed development projects;

(b) Working with the partners in the development effort to provide budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority and to address the budget deficit;

(c) Strengthening institution-building programmes and targeted technical assistance, in order that greater progress could be made towards reaching sustainable socio-economic development;

(d) Encouraging greater private-sector involvement in the development effort to stimulate growth, economic development and employment generation;

(e) Expediting donor disbursements so that the Public Investment Programme, adopted by the Palestinian Authority and supported by the international community, could be implemented.

II. BACKGROUND

4. On 13 September 1993, the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements at the White House in Washington, D.C. (the "Oslo Accords") (see A/48/486-S/26568). Recognizing that the socio-economic advancement of the Palestinians would be a necessary condition for the continued success of the peace process, the Secretary-General formed a high-level task force on the social and economic development of the Gaza Strip and Jericho, which identified the ways in which the United Nations could expand its programmes of assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Task Force, which completed its work on 23 September 1993, highlighted the need to implement projects that would quickly make a visible improvement in the daily lives of Palestinians and stressed the importance of continuing to support ongoing programmes which contributed to Palestinian socio-economic well-being.

5. On 1 October 1993, over 40 donor countries and institutions, including the United Nations, gathered at the Washington, D.C. Conference to Support Middle East Peace. The Conference, hosted by the United States, affirmed the urgent need to improve living conditions and make rapid progress towards sustainable socio-economic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Donors pledged approximately $2.4 billion, which would be disbursed over the five years of the transitional period. The General Assembly, in its resolution 48/213 of 21 December 1993, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", called upon relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to intensify their assistance in response to the urgent needs of the Palestinian people and to improve coordination through an appropriate mechanism under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

6. In his report to the Fifth Committee of 29 March 1994 (A/C.5/48/71, para. 6), the Secretary-General noted that "in view of the mandates of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the nature of their respective operations ... it would be inappropriate to designate one as the 'lead agency' in the occupied territories with the responsibilities of implementation of resolution 48/213. Given the complexity and sensitivity of the situation in the region and the multiplicity of factors outside the United Nations system which will be involved during the transitional phase, it will be necessary to establish a specific mechanism to ensure effective coordination and intensification of international assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territories to meet their immediate and longer-term needs". The Secretary-General announced his intention to appoint a Special Coordinator with responsibilities for, inter alia, "providing overall guidance to and facilitating coordination among the respective United Nations programmes and agencies which are operating in the territories, so as to ensure an integrated and unified approach towards economic and social development".

7. Accordingly, in 1994, the Secretary-General appointed a Special Co-Coordinator, Ambassador Terje Rød-Larsen, as the focal point for all United Nations economic, social and other assistance in the occupied territories. The Special Coordinator provides overall guidance to United Nations programmes and agencies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, both those with representation in the field and those operating from abroad. The Special Coordinator facilitates coordination within the United Nations family, and also works closely with the World Bank, in assisting the Palestinian Authority in reaching an integrated and unified approach to the development effort launched by the Washington Conference. The Special Coordinator also represents the United Nations in the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee and related bodies established to follow up on the Washington Conference and serves as the focal point in dealing with the donor community. He maintains relations with relevant regional organizations and financial institutions, as well as maintaining close contact with non-governmental organizations.

8. Since its inception in 1994, the Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO), has been among those parties that have been instrumental in establishing the donor coordination mechanisms described below that have brought together the Palestinian Authority, donors, the World Bank and the United Nations. The unique position of the United Nations within these coordination mechanisms has enabled the Organization to influence policy and present projects for donor consideration. The United Nations presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has increased from three organizations in 1993 to 15 in 1997. An additional 12 organizations of the United Nations system are providing technical assistance and expertise to the Palestinian Authority. The combined United Nations total of funds dispersed through regular budgets and funds for specific projects was approximately US$ 254 million in 1996.

III. WORK OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

9. On 29 and 30 November 1994, the main donor-led body overseeing the assistance effort, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, met at Brussels. At the suggestion of the United Nations, the Committee decided to devolve certain aspects of the donor coordination process to the level of representatives in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For that purpose, the Committee established a Local Aid Coordination Committee, to be composed of the Palestinian Authority and all donors to the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including Israel. The co-chairs of the Local Aid Coordination Committee are Norway, in its capacity as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee; the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories; and the World Bank. The latter two act as joint secretariat to the Local Aid Coordination Committee. Representatives of the Government of Israel are also invited to the meetings. Meetings of the Local Aid Coordination Committee provide a forum for donors to report on their activities and the Palestinian Authority to provide updates on the budget deficit.

10. In April 1995, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee established the Joint Liaison Committee, which provides a forum in which economic policy and practical matters related to donor assistance are discussed with the Palestinian Authority. It is comprised of the Palestinian Authority as gavel holder; Norway, in its capacity

as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, as shepherd; the United Nations and the World Bank as joint secretariat; the United States of America and the European Union. Japan was also asked to take part in the meetings. The Joint Liaison Committee discusses bilateral issues relating to donor assistance with the participation of representatives of Israel, who are invited to attend all meetings. The Joint Liaison Committee first met on 15 May 1995 and meets approximately six times a year.

11. As part of his efforts in United Nations coordination, the Special Coordinator convened the third United Nations inter-agency meeting in Gaza, from 15 to 17 April 1996. The main purpose of the meeting, which was attended by over 20 agencies and programmes of the Organization, was to establish priorities for the United Nations programmes of assistance for 1997. These priorities, accompanied by project proposals for addressing unmet needs, were presented in the form of sectoral strategy papers in the areas of education, health, employment generation, infrastructure and housing, institution-building and the private sector. Entitled "Putting peace to work: priorities and strategies for the development effort in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1997", these papers articulated a coordinated and targeted approach to the main developmental priorities, as identified by the Palestinian Authority, and included proposals from United Nations agencies and programmes for specific technical and project assistance for implementation beginning in late 1996 and 1997. United Nations organizations developed their proposed 1997 programmes in response to needs and priorities identified by the Palestinian Authority and in coordination with the Ministry for Planning and International Cooperation, relevant sectoral ministries of the Palestinian Authority, as well as with the World Bank.

12. The proposed programme of United Nations assistance for 1997, as outlined in the strategy papers, was presented to the donor community by the Special Coordinator at the Consultative Group meeting held in Paris on 19 and 20 November 1996. The meeting was preceded by an intense round of meetings and consultations to prepare the Palestinian Public Investment Programme for 1997, in which the donor coordination mechanisms on the ground - sector working groups, the Local Aid Coordination Committee and the Joint Liaison Committee - coordinated in defining policies and setting priorities. This participatory process, involving the Palestinian Authority, donors, the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), resulted in a comprehensive public investment programme of US$ 865 million, which included 48 United Nations projects totalling $113 million. At the meeting, attended by representatives of 35 donor countries and 14 development agencies, $888 million was pledged.

13. Preparation of the Palestinian Development Plan for 1998-2000 commenced in early 1997. The aim of the improved preparatory process was to better target donor funding to Palestinian development needs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The process drew upon the experience of 1996 and the expertise of Palestinian Authority ministries and agencies and the sector working groups of the Local Aid Coordination Committee. The sector working groups were set up in 1995 to facilitate communication and coordination between donors and the Palestinian Authority and are composed of the shepherd, the largest of the donors interested in that particular sector; the gavel holder, normally a Palestinian ministry; and the United Nations or the World Bank, which act as secretariat. Greater

emphasis is being placed on the role of the Palestinian gavel holder, in order to transfer greater responsibility for the sector working groups from the international community to the Palestinian Authority and to enhance capacity-building. As part of the effort to increase the efficiency and usefulness of the sector working groups, a series of evaluative workshops was held in early 1997, leading in some cases to the creation of more focused subgroups. Under the guidance of a steering committee, chaired by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the sector working groups will also assist the Palestinian Authority in formulating the Palestinian Public Investment Programme by identifying and prioritizing sectoral needs and by drafting development strategies.

IV. SECTORAL SITUATIONS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A. Education

14. Education is the largest public-service sector within the Palestinian Authority's area of responsibility, employing almost 22,000 people and catering to the needs of approximately 1.2 million children. Immediate priorities for the Palestinian Authority upon assumption of responsibility were the upgrading of rundown and inadequate physical infrastructure and a revitalization of human resources. Comprehensive efforts to relieve the overcrowding, insufficient number of schools and deteriorating premises are continuing and will remain a high priority owing to the demands of a rapidly increasing and youthful population. An estimated 40 new schools per year are required simply to keep up with the natural increase and there is still a need for textbooks, and classroom, laboratory and playground equipment in the almost 1,500 existing schools.

15. Capacity development at the classroom level is also urgently needed in order to revitalize an educational process which has suffered from low teacher morale and lack of institutional support. The framework for such efforts must be a comprehensive institutional development process targeting the educational system overall, its policy-making and implementation procedures at every level. Given the impact of education on long-term development, the sectoral priority is to support the Palestinian Authority's implementation of its National Plan of Action for Children, in which the formal, non-formal and early childhood education fields are targeted for improvement in quality, access and management.

B. Employment generation

16. The average number of Palestinians working legally inside Israel fell from a pre-war estimate of 180,000 or more, to 116,000 in 1992 and 83,000 in 1993, to an average of 22,000 for 1996. An estimated 16,000 Palestinians join the labour force each year, according to estimates of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Accommodating these new job seekers or even a part of the large number of unemployed and underemployed would require the creation of 30,000 to 40,000 new jobs each year. Owing to this high growth in the labour force (at roughly 4 per cent per annum) and the youthful nature of the population (almost 50 per cent under 15 years of age), it is unlikely that the

Palestinian economy will be able to absorb many of those presently unemployed or accommodate the anticipated increases.

17. The employment problem in the West Bank and Gaza Strip requires a two-track approach, to address immediate needs through the provision of short-term job opportunities, while at the same time formulating long-term strategies to expand employment opportunities. Longer-term domestic opportunities must also be expanded to absorb those previously employed in Israel and short-term employment created to alleviate the economic and psychosocial effects of the change in circumstances. In order to address long-term employment needs, there must be changes in the preparation of the labour force: university graduates experience high levels of unemployment due to the concentration on humanities and social science rather than science and technology-related fields. Private enterprise and investment must be encouraged in such important sectors as agriculture, which represented 30 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1993. Coupled with these measures, as is the case in all sectors, is the need to develop a transparent, streamlined legal and regulatory framework.

C. Health

18. The fragmentation of health services between different providers, the lack of standardization in skills and services and the neglected state of physical infrastructure and equipment were the priority needs identified in the health sector by the Palestinian Authority upon its assumption of responsibility. In general, as with other sectors, the health sector had suffered from the lack of Palestinian participation at planning and decision-making levels during the years of occupation. In addition, the human and technical resources for gathering comprehensive data for the whole of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were unavailable; consequently, health providers were unable to ascertain fully the scale and priority of health problems.

19. There exists no comprehensive health safety net and many families cannot afford health insurance coverage. This creates particular problems in the case of specialist health care which is currently unavailable in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, necessitating patient referrals to Israeli hospitals. In addition, there is currently an overemphasis on curative care at the secondary and tertiary stages of an illness rather than preventive and primary health care, which greatly increases costs both system-wide and at the household level. There is a clear need for comprehensive planning and policy formulation at every level, emphasizing health education as well as primary health care. Currently, almost one quarter of all patients' first contacts with health-care services are initiated as "emergencies", which places higher financial and manpower costs upon the system. The 1996 health budget was US$96 million, up from $76 million the previous year.

20. Overall health indicators for the West Bank and Gaza Strip are similar to those of other Arab countries of the Middle East and of countries with similar socio-economic characteristics. Major causes of child mortality (deaths under five years) are acute respiratory infections, which account for 28 per cent of child deaths per year, and diarrhoeal disease (10 per cent). Child and maternal nutrition deficiencies are evident in the high rates of anaemia, diarrhoeal

disease and related problems. There remains a need for widespread health education - aimed at both the public and health professionals - in order to lessen the severity of acute respiratory infection, diarrhoeal disease and anaemia, among other pressing health problems. On the whole, however, the West Bank and Gaza Strip are characterized by pockets of need rather than the pressing health sector demands evident in some developing countries. Sectoral priorities remain centred around the strengthening of institutional and human capacity within the context of developing a locally relevant, locally managed comprehensive health-care system.

D. Infrastructure and housing

21. Neglected infrastructure remains one of the most pressing challenges facing the Palestinian Authority. Between 1970 and 1992, a total of US$ 15 was spent per capita on infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, compared with $1,500 per capita in Israel and $400 in Jordan. Consistent underfunding has resulted in decaying and inadequate systems which are overwhelmed by current demand. Modern roads planned with the needs of the local communities in mind, adequate and environmentally sound water and sanitation systems, and efficient electricity and telecommunications capable of facilitating development and commercial expansion; all remain priority areas of work in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, housing is characterized by a large gap between supply and demand and a lack of government investment and remains subject to restrictions in zoning, planning and building permits.

22. Demand for electricity continues to increase, as the population grows and residential and industrial use expands. However, over 130 villages in the West Bank still have either no electricity at all or are supplied for only a few hours every day. Only 29 per cent of the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip are connected to a public sewage system, and raw sewage continues to be diverted into cesspits, posing an environmental hazard to the underground aquifers which are the main water resource. In 1995, the Palestinian Water Authority assumed responsibility for the coordination of activities related to water and waste-water management but owing to the absence of any substantive development in the water and sewage sector previously, much remains to be done. Long-term planning has begun and sewage treatment plants are being overhauled on an individual basis, but the process of rehabilitating the entire system is lengthy. In addition, insufficient facilities for solid waste disposal or irregular collection in many areas compounds the problem.

23. Over 40 per cent of the existing road network requires urgent repairs, and the entire road system needs to be reworked in order to better facilitate growth, development and the expansion of commerce. Fully functioning airports and seaports are a necessity if trade, commerce and tourism are to develop to their full potential. Telecommunications are improving, although outstanding needs remain. Currently, the number of phones per person stands at 1:46, compared with 1:15 in Jordan, presenting a constraint to the development of commercial enterprises. The Palestinian Authority has plans for an expansion to a quarter of a million telephone lines by the year 2000, compared with the current figure of 90,000.

E. Institution-building

24. Three years after the assumption of responsibility by the Palestinian Authority, major progress has been made in institution-building efforts in the area of public administration at both central and local levels. Much of the donor initiative has been focused on support for the initial start-up phase of the Palestinian assumption of responsibilities, capital expenditures and recurrent costs. This has been accompanied by institution-building efforts, assisting in the development process through technical assistance to those ministries and other institutions responsible for the delivery of public and social services. The challenge continues to be to assist in the assumption of central responsibilities by the Palestinian Authority, and to support the expansion of scope at local and non-governmental tiers. At all levels, ensuring financial accountability and operational transparency of ministries, councils and organizations is key to continued international participation in the development process.

25. Increasing attention is also being devoted to the strengthening of the legal system, the development of institutional capacity for the administration of justice and protection of human rights, and the establishment of a regulatory framework in both the public and private sectors. Other priorities include the encouragement of private investment and the fostering of donor confidence by enhancing the legal environment surrounding private-sector investment, specifically, land registration, building and property ownership, and planning and zoning regulations. The public-sector regulatory framework also needs to be developed with respect to taxation and banking laws, labour laws and workers' rights, and environmental protection.

F. Private sector

26. The expansion and encouragement of the private sector is central to the achievement of long-term structural employment but investment is currently inhibited by fears of potential economic losses owing to closures and the resultant lack of access to markets and materials. In addition, there is the ongoing need to develop a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework which is conducive to private-sector investment. Continued support to the banking sector is also required, to ensure that the financial services needed for business investment and expansion are available and dependable.

27. Private-sector investment in housing construction accounts for some 85 per cent of private-sector investment. Agriculture is also an important economic activity, generating roughly one third of GDP and one quarter of all exports, largely centred around small, family-based farms. However, the sector has been unable to develop to its full economic potential, mainly owing to the effects of border closures, the lack of access to markets, the threat of ever decreasing access to water resources and dependence on, and inappropriate use of, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. There is a need for further development of rain-fed crops and multi-cropping, and institutional support, in the form of credit facilities, uniform legislation and research and testing stations where pioneer crop-testing and new methodologies can be tried out.

28. The Palestinian Authority has also highlighted the tourism sector as another area for development and income generation, and the approaching turn of the millennium is expected to attract a huge influx of visitors to the region. While major efforts are under way, particularly in Bethlehem, the sector requires additional physical infrastructure and improvement of services in order to capitalize on the opportunities offered and to counter the effects of the closure.

V. ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE: ONGOING PROGRAMMES, UNMET NEEDS AND PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

29. After consultations with the programmes and agencies of the United Nations system active in the area (a list of which appears in the annex to the present report), the Special Coordinator prepared the following update on assistance received by the Palestinian people in the occupied territories during the reporting period from United Nations agencies and programmes, together with an analysis of needs still unmet and specific proposals for responding effectively to them.

United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services

30. The Department for Development Support and Management Services has been involved in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1995, when five project documents were formulated, comprising a comprehensive package of assistance to the Palestinian Authority in the area of public finance and business development. In February 1997, one of these projects involving the strengthening of audit capability received initial funding from the UNDP-Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) as a component of a three-year programme on governance and public administration. The Department is providing technical support to the project as an associated agency. Specific proposals have also been put forward for projects covering: strengthening government financial and performance reporting; establishing internal auditing as a strong element of management control; and improving tax administration.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

31. ESCWA has focused its activities on supporting the economic and social sectors in the occupied territories as well as monitoring their developments through the provision of advisory services and technical assistance and the preparation of reports, analytical studies and project proposals regarding the rehabilitation of the Palestinian economy. Activities in 1996 included a report of the advisory mission to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Natural Resources Bureau. Future proposals include the preparation of a project document on the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector and the provision of advisory services on agriculture, energy, the environment, industry, international trade, population and social development, statistics and water. ESCWA also organizes training workshops and seminars in cooperation with other specialized agencies and relevant Arab, regional and national organizations.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

32. FAO's assistance to the Palestinian people commenced in 1986. In 1993 and 1994, joint FAO/ESCWA missions visited the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the aim of assessing the situation of the agricultural sector and identifying needs for rehabilitation and development. In June 1996, FAO expanded its support to the Ministry of Agriculture through a project aimed at enhancing the institutional, managerial and technical capabilities of the Ministry in the area of policy analysis and planning. A March 1997 joint FAO/World Bank Cooperative Programme mission visited the area to identify the major components to be considered within the framework of the agricultural sector rehabilitation project and to formulate a detailed project description. The proposed project components are in line with the report of a World Bank mission of November 1996 and include proposals for natural resources management and rural access roads, market development and agricultural support services and institutional strengthening. Plans for 1997 and 1998 include implementing projects for the rehabilitation of springs, irrigation canals and wells and a swordfish longline training course for Gaza fishermen in Cyprus.

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

33. In May 1996, the Habitat Liaison Unit was established and staffed by an associate expert provided by the Italian Government. Subsequently, the two-year project entitled "A Support to Habitat Liaison Unit" was initiated. Since June 1996, Habitat has been preparing a project document entitled "Preparatory activities for the development of a national housing strategy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip". This project is intended to assist the Ministry of Housing in the preparation and formulation of a comprehensive housing policy and implementation strategy. An additional report entitled "Preliminary information for the sustainable cities programme in Gaza City" was prepared in December 1996 and an initial assessment mission was scheduled for June 1997.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

34. IAEA has formulated a manpower development project with the objective of upgrading and strengthening human resources in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the application of nuclear science and technology in the relevant sectors. Despite difficulties in the implementation of this project owing to the limited opportunities for providing technical assistance in the specialized field relevant to the mandate of the Agency, an agreement has been reached with the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy, to provide training, expert services and basic equipment to the University of Bethlehem for some activities approved by the Agency. In addition, IAEA has received a specific project request for consideration under its 1997-1998 technical cooperation programme, with the objective of setting up a laboratory at Bethlehem University to study irradiation effects on optical fibre sensors and to raise the level of training and research in this field.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

35. ICAO has formulated three proposals for technical assistance to the Palestinian Civil Aviation Authority and has identified the following needs for

1997: drafting of a civil aviation law and civil aviation-related regulations; procurement of aerodrome ground equipment; and assistance in decision-making regarding the construction of a heliport in Jericho. The Agency's proposal for the preparation of a civil aviation master plan was included in the Palestinian Authority's Public Investment Programme for 1997.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

36. IFAD has designed and financed the ongoing Gaza Strip and Jericho Relief and Development Programme, under the responsibility of a non-governmental organization, American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA). Local and international non-governmental organizations acted as partners to the newly emerging government agencies in the day-to-day implementation of the programme activities, to their mutual benefit. The programme was designed to address the immediate needs of small farmers and fishermen, women and landless people in the rural areas of Jericho and the Gaza Strip. Programme components include conservation and improving the utilization of irrigation water, rehabilitation of citrus and olive plantations, repair and maintenance of existing small-scale irrigation systems and fisheries development and promotion of income-generating activities. The programme also provides funds for institutional support and training.

37. In addition, IFAD has identified outstanding needs in the Ramallah and Nablus areas, covering approximately 146 villages and a population of 380,000 inhabitants. In agreement with the Palestinian Authority, priority will be given to land reclamation, agricultural roads and the rehabilitation of wells and springs. Assistance will be provided in the context of an IFAD area-based development project to benefit small farmers, the Participatory Natural Resource Management Project, by means of a projected IFAD loan of $10 million.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

38. ILO, and its Turin International Training Centre, have been executing technical cooperation projects in the following fields: institution-building and labour administration; vocational training and rehabilitation; social and labour statistics; employment promotion; workers' activities; employers' activities; small enterprise development; and human resources development. The total budget of activities launched by ILO since 1994 amounts to US$ 11.4 million.

39. During the last 12 months, ILO has assisted the Ministry of Labour in the fields of labour inspection, employment services, safety and health, and vocational training. ILO provided technical advisory services with respect to labour legislation. The Palestinian Employment Programme, which was launched in early 1997, strengthened the capacity of the Ministry of Labour in designing policies and programmes on employment and labour market issues, as well as establishing measures for the creation of sustainable and productive jobs. With the assistance of ILO, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has finalized the design of a long-term programme for its Labour Statistics Department and has conducted three rounds of a labour force survey. ILO is assisting the Ministry of Social Affairs in its efforts to support the socio-economic reintegration of disadvantaged groups. An ILO-executed programme

for the social and economic reintegration of ex-detainees focuses on staff training, technical advisory services and the provision of credit facilities for the creation of micro-enterprises.

40. In addition, capacity-building assistance has been provided to employers' and workers' organizations, related to the development of infrastructure, the training of staff and to policies and programmes. ILO is currently providing technical assistance to the Contractors Union to strengthen the managerial capacity of its affiliated members and is currently implementing a training programme of in-country and overseas courses specifically designed for Palestinian Authority officials as well as for workers' and employers' representatives. Preparatory work has been completed on identifying the main components for a comprehensive programme of institutional and human resources development for the Palestinian Public Administration sector. Another recently launched educational initiative supports the Ministry of Higher Education in the development of three technical colleges.

41. As part of its strategies for the 1998-1999 biennium, the ILO programme of assistance will continue to place special emphasis on the active promotion of workers and dialogue among the social partners. A high priority will be given to training and institution-building in the fields of labour market information systems, employment and manpower policies and private-sector development. Emphasis will be placed on the eradication of child labour, the promotion of job creation for small and medium-sized enterprises, the development of legal and institutional frameworks to facilitate income-generating job opportunities for women and disadvantaged sectors, and the development of national safety and health schemes. Specific proposals have been incorporated into the Palestinian Public Investment Programme, including ongoing projects for the development of the Ministry of Labour, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, as well as the National Centre for Public Administration.

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

42. IMO has formulated two proposals for technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority which identify, as a priority, the establishment of an independent maritime administration for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since March 1996, IMO has been executing a regional project for the Mediterranean financed by the European Commission's LIFE Programme. The Palestinian Authority is one of the 11 participants in the project, which is entitled "Development of port State control capability in the Mediterranean". Based on their participation, the Palestinian Authority has received a number of offers of technical assistance and training from a number of States in the Mediterranean. In addition, IMO is considering fielding a mission in order to discuss a proposed programme of technical assistance with the Palestinian Authority and donors represented in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

International Trade Centre (ITC)

43. In May 1996, ITC began implementing a technical cooperation project for the development of exports of selected high-value, freshly cut flowers. The project, entitled "Export development and promotion of high-value floricultural products", is aimed at assisting agricultural cooperatives, growers and

marketing enterprises in the development and diversification of high-value, non-traditional floricultural products and the export marketing of these products to regional and international markets. Complementary objectives of the project are to increase the role of Palestinian women in economic development through their direct involvement in agricultural production and export trade and to create associations for export marketing and extension services, as well as generating employment. In addition to three proposals for technical assistance to the agricultural export, trade and industrial sectors, ITC has recently formulated two project ideas, focusing on enhancement of the role of women in trade development and training in purchasing and supply management.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

44. Following ITU field missions in 1994 and 1995, a long-term technical assistance programme for 1996-1997 was formulated and an action plan drawn up focusing on the following sectoral priorities: secondment of senior technical export; preparation of a sectoral telecommunications study; preparation of a project document for the development of a long-term master plan for telecommunications and establishment of a telecommunications training programme; and granting of fellowships for technical training.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

45. UNCTAD carried out two research studies in close consultation with the Palestinian Authority: "Prospects for sustained development of the Palestinian economy: strategies and policies for reconstruction and development"; and "Private investment in the Palestinian territory: recent trends and immediate prospects".

46. A programming and advisory services mission was fielded in 1996 in order to advise Palestinian Authority institutions with regard to trade policy. Organized within the context of the UNCTAD/UNDP Regional Programme for Arab States Trade Integration, two workshops were held in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively, in March 1997, focusing on the emerging international trade system and its implications for the Palestinian economy. Follow-up activities are being developed in close cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and the relevant organizations of the United Nations system. Project profiles have been formulated in the following areas: assistance in the introduction of trade efficiency measures; assistance in human resources development; and expansion of trade in goods and services between the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Jordan, Egypt and other trading partners, as an initiative in subregional cooperation. Preparatory work has also been completed for the implementation of a UNDP-funded project on the Nablus industrial estate/export processing zone.

United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)

47. The strategy of UNDCP focuses on a multisectoral approach to coordinate and integrate drug control policies into the broader developmental policies of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 1995, in close collaboration with the Palestinian Authority, UNDCP prepared the "Multisectoral Drug Control Assistance to the Palestinian Authority" project, which will provide technical assistance to establish a drug control institutional framework, to reduce the illicit supply

of narcotic drugs through improved detection, interdiction and prosecution capacities and prevent and reduce drug abuse through improved awareness, treatment and rehabilitation methods. Emphasis will be placed on capacity-building through training in the above areas.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

48. UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) was initiated in 1980. Resources were dedicated to infrastructure-building projects; water supply systems, sewage systems, schools, hospitals, industrial zones and a citrus processing plant. The provision of infrastructure has been accompanied by a comprehensive programme of technical assistance and capacity development.

49. In 1996, UNDP expanded its advocacy role in the promotion of sustainable human development themes such as poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, gender in development and environmental management. UNDP also launched major activities aimed at enhancing capacity in governance at local, municipal and central levels of the Palestinian Authority, taking full advantage of the considerable local expertise available in the area. Responding to the severe economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a result of prolonged periods of border closure, a primary UNDP/PAPP intervention was aimed at employment generation, with the result that 26,000 temporary jobs were created through six new employment generation projects. UNDP also began to formulate large-scale employment generation programmes, such as the infrastructure rehabilitation related to the Bethlehem 2000 initiative, as well as land reclamation, spring rehabilitation and water harvesting. The employment generation programme was also introduced in the West Bank for the first time.

50. Under its Infrastructure Development Programme, UNDP continued to provide both physical infrastructure rehabilitation and institution-building assistance. Domestic water systems for 20 rural villages were constructed in the West Bank, and rehabilitation of existing water networks and construction of ground storage reservoirs were completed in Hebron and Tulkarem. In the Gaza Strip, UNDP rehabilitated and upgraded the water distribution system for Khan Younis and completed a sewage collection system for an area adjacent to the Jabalia refugee camp. UNDP also provided institutional development assistance to the Palestinian Water Authority and to municipal water departments. The rehabilitation of 17 schools in the rural West Bank was also completed, and a school and sports complex built in Jericho. Two agricultural vocational training centres were constructed and UNDP also undertook constructions at al-Ittihad Hospital in Nablus, Beit Jala Hospital and Tulkarem Hospital. In addition, a four-building, 256-unit apartment complex for families of the Palestinian Police Force was built in Gaza. In total, UNDP delivered over $37 million through its Infrastructure Development Programme in 1996.

51. Activities related to the promotion of sustainable human development included the completion, in April 1997, of a human development profile document. In addition, UNDP launched a number of initiatives focusing on the characteristics and root causes of poverty, including poverty-mapping and identification of policy options. UNDP also expanded its gender-in-development project and made progress in integrating two key public-sector activities into

the National Centre for Public Administration of the Palestinian Authority. Some 1,500 Palestinian civil servants participated in over 70 Public Administration Training Programme training courses, while 44 expatriate Palestinian TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals) consultants were fielded to the benefit of 28 Palestinian Authority institutions. In addition, a UNDP/PAPP Governance and Public Administration Support Programme was formulated in 1996.

52. Within private-sector development, UNDP focused on agriculture, with several large-scale programmes in policy analysis and planning, institutional support, research and extension, brucellosis control and the development and/or rehabilitation of land and water resources through labour-intensive methods. The UNDP/United Nations Capital Development Local Rural Development Programme was also reformulated in 1996. In addition, in the private sector UNDP, together with the World Tourism Organization, launched the initial phase of a tourism development programme, including the Bethlehem 2000 initiative and other tourism activities.

53. UNDP has expanded its United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and a national UNV modality was introduced. UNV is currently executing a youth project to rehabilitate seven youth centres across the Gaza Strip. UNVs are also involved in a campaign to control brucellosis to be implemented in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Phase II of UNV's White Helmets Initiative started in February 1997 to follow up on a development of the master plan for the city of Gaza. The project includes computer training to staff members of the urban planning department. Three sports experts arrived in March 1997 to work with the Ministry of Youths and Sports in training the national soccer team and conducting a training-of-trainers programme. UNV's future plans include a project with a school for the hearing-impaired and plans to implement a project in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, focusing on women's health issues.

54. In 1997, UNDP/PAPP is continuing its programming activities aimed primarily at strengthening the human resources and institutional capacities of its Palestinian implementing partners. Major programme initiatives for the year include the continuation of UNDP/PAPP's capacity-building technical assistance programmes, such as the Governance and Public Administration Support Programme, the Local Rural Development Programme and the Agriculture Development Programme. As a follow-up step to the first Human Development Profile, new initiatives will also be launched in poverty eradication, gender-in-development, sustainable livelihoods, and community-based participatory development. UNDP/PAPP will also continue to support the Palestinian Authority through ongoing support to the Bethlehem 2000 Steering Committee.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

55. In cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, UNEP has developed two project proposals. The project on environmental law aims at assisting the Palestinian Authority in developing its human resources capacity in environmental law, policy and administration. The project on environmental economics focuses on training in environmental impact assessment. In addition,

UNEP has been active in advocating the inclusion of an environmental perspective in the development programmes of other United Nations agencies.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

56. UNESCO has undertaken a programme of cooperation with the Palestinian people since 1974. In April 1994, a plan of action was prepared by the joint UNESCO/Palestinian Coordination Committee which was translated into a Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP), which contains 27 projects in UNESCO's fields of expertise. The aim of UNESCO/PAPP is to continue to improve education, training and educational materials in order to strengthen institution- and capacity-building in Palestinian institutions.

57. In the education sector, phase I of the development of the Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre was concluded in October 1996 with the preparation of a five-year plan, and with phase II commenced immediately thereafter. UNESCO also began implementation of its "Inclusive schools and community support programmes" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and granted fellowships for long- and short-term study abroad for Palestinian students. UNESCO also assisted in the acquisition of training and equipment by the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and related institutions and carried out intensive capacity development at the planning and policy formulation levels within the education sector. Under the Palestinian European Academic Cooperation in Education (PEACE) programme, co-sponsored by UNESCO and the European Union, an international conference took place at Nablus in November 1996 in support of Palestinian universities. Related activities included exchanges of academic staff between Palestinian and European universities, the donation of scientific texts and equipment and ongoing activities by the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme in archaeology and languages.

58. In support of the Bethlehem 2000 initiative, a master plan for activities in Bethlehem celebrating the turn of the millennium has been developed. Related activities in 1996 included a joint Italian-Palestinian workshop on tourism, a touring photographic exhibition and a Peace Concert held in Italy. UNESCO's other activities in the field of communications and culture include the restoration of the mosaics in Hisham's Palace in Jericho and the initiation of a project to modernize the Palestinian Information Agency, WAFA.

59. UNESCO's proposals for 1998-1999 include the continuation of current initiatives in education and higher education and culture, the development of public libraries, the creation of an archaeological park in Jericho, the establishment of a Palestinian museum and the development of youth/cultural centres. A UNESCO liaison office was opened in Ramallah in the West Bank in May 1997.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

60. UNFPA first extended assistance to the Palestinian people in 1986 in cooperation with the World Health Organization. UNFPA's assistance was provided on a project-by-project basis until 1996, when the first UNFPA Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP 1996-1999) was developed.

61. UNFPA/PAPP addresses basic needs in three core areas. In reproductive health, the programme aims to develop capacity in the Ministry of Health's Department of Women's Health and Development and the Department of Primary Health Care, to better develop, coordinate and monitor the implementation of women's health policies. UNFPA/PAPP will also assist in providing reproductive health-care services to 100 primary health-care centres and two women's health centres in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In addition, following on the successful implementation of the women's centre for health care, social assistance and legal counselling and community education in Bureij camp in the Gaza Strip, plans for a similar centre in the Jabalia camp received preliminary approval by UNFPA in January 1997. UNFPA has also recently approved the Jenin Community-based Reproductive Health Project, which is intended to raise awareness of reproductive health issues, including family planning, among men and women in Jenin, as well as strengthening the capacity of 30 non-governmental organization-run clinics for the provision of reproductive health services and information.

62. In the area of population and development strategies, UNFPA/PAPP will assist the Palestinian Authority in carrying out a census to make available reliable and up-to-date population and housing data necessary for development planning. In addition, UNFPA has been assisting the Palestinian Authority in formulating a project in training in population and vital statistics. Finally, in the area of advocacy, UNFPA/PAPP will concentrate on sensitizing policy makers and planners to gender issues and ensuring that gender concerns are integrated into development plans.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights

63. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights signed a technical cooperation agreement with the Palestinian Authority in April 1996 to provide for the implementation of a comprehensive technical cooperation programme in the field of human rights in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. As part of the programme, the Office and the Centre established an office in Gaza in November 1996 to implement programme activities in cooperation with Palestinian counterparts.

64. A major objective is the establishment of a legal framework consistent with international human rights standards. The complexity of the Palestinian legal system, reflecting multiple legal influences and heritages, makes the harmonization of laws a priority. Efforts are being devoted to strengthening the technical capacity of the relevant Palestinian bodies and institutions and mobilizing existing expertise to ensure integration of international standards in the new Palestinian legislation. Activities of the Office and the Centre in this area have included direct assistance to the Legislation and Legal Opinion Office of the Ministry of Justice. In particular, assistance is being provided in drafting a new prison law and training staff of the Office in legal drafting techniques. Support is also being given to the various local organizations and academic centres to conduct legal analysis and review work in areas crucial to the strengthening of the rule of law. The Palestinian Authority is further being assisted in developing a national plan of action for human rights in Gaza and the West Bank to facilitate coordinated and strategic planning in this

field. The Office and the Centre are also working with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Human Rights with the objective of supporting its research and policy advice functions on human rights.

65. In addition, the Office and the Centre are supporting institutions essential in ensuring implementation of laws and policies protective of human rights at the national level and are working to establish a human rights training capacity within the Palestinian police force by developing a human rights curriculum and a programme for the training of police trainers in human rights. In the area of penal institutions, they are focusing on assistance in developing legislation on prisons and on strengthening the judiciary. Direct assistance is also being provided to non-governmental organizations in the area of law reform and women's rights, with a view to supporting legal research to identify areas where the development of legislation to promote women's rights and equal opportunities is needed. The Office and the Centre also support the work of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

66. UNICEF's programme for Palestinian women and children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began in 1980 and expanded in 1991. The UNICEF Programme of Cooperation is comprised of two supporting programmes and four sectoral programmes. Of the supporting programmes, "Planning and capacity development of Palestinian ministries and institutions" includes social sector database development, studies, surveys, training of personnel and publication of reports; and "Advocacy and communication" focuses on promoting the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the goals of the World Summit for Children and the National Programme of Action for Palestinian Children.

67. The sectoral programme on health and nutrition focuses on capacity development and community mobilization, the technical and supply assistance provision of technical assistance and supplies, including: expanded programme of immunization; control of diarrhoeal disease and acute respiratory infections within the primary health-care system; health education for adolescents and women; continued support to the Health Services Management Unit; support of women's health issues and policy promotion on iodine deficiency disorders and breastfeeding; and technical support for emergency preparedness to the Ministry of Health and non-governmental organizations.

68. Programmes in education consist of technical and cash support to primary education through the Ministry of Education by means of teacher training, curriculum development, active learning and reading promotion projects. Capacity development of the Ministry of Education was supported through the programme on educational management of information systems.

69. Projects carried out with the Ministry of Social Affairs and non-governmental organizations under the programme on early childhood development and better parenting include the development of safe play areas for children and psychosocial development activities for children affected by trauma. The youth and community development programmes focus on the mobilization of youth, summer camps for entertainment and non-formal education,

and the development of a Child-Friendly Community Initiative in 15 communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

70. UNICEF's efforts have been focused on improving the quality of basic services, targeting the most vulnerable groups in society and reducing gender and regional disparities. The adoption by the Palestinian Authority of the National Programme of Action for Children, the establishment of a Secretariat for Children within the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation as well as other initiatives by the Palestinian Authority are evidence of the endorsement of UNICEF's advocacy of "putting children first". In 1997, UNICEF's activities will be extended to local institutions and municipalities, and it will also be necessary to expand cooperation with non-governmental organizations, international, regional and women's organizations. UNICEF's programme of cooperation for the period 1998-2000 will address these needs by calling for investment in a basic system of social services to support the peace process.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

71. UNIDO has developed a strategy for technical assistance in private-sector development for industry, small and medium-scale enterprises, human resources development and technology. UNIDO's programme complements existing initiatives being implemented by bilateral and multilateral donors and non-governmental organizations and aims to address areas not yet covered by ongoing support programmes. In continuation of a project for the integrated development of the building materials and construction industry, UNIDO completed a series of background studies, conducted a study tour and held a number of seminars on sectoral assessment. Follow-up activities include the establishment of a Palestinian National Building Committee. The organization's other activities included support for the establishment of the Palestine Standards Organization; and preparatory assistance for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, UNIDO began implementing a project for the promotion of the application of renewable energy and conducted a training seminar on industrial project preparation and appraisal in the West Bank.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

72. UNIFEM's activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have focused on institution-building, information facilitation and economic empowerment of women. The pilot phase of the Women in Development (WID) Facilitation Initiative is being implemented through the establishment of a computer database, the holding of workshops on the use of the Internet as a means of networking among Palestinian women and on women's credit programmes, and the issuance of the Beyond Beijing Newsletter. A regional project is being finalized covering the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Egypt and Yemen. UNIFEM is also working to promote the principles embodied in the Campaign to Eradicate Discrimination against Women. In addition, the Enterprise Development Project is being carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs. By the end of 1996, 21 co-trainers in business skills training and 20 low-income women entrepreneurs had undergone training. Training is an ongoing component of the project, with the objective of transferring management skills to potential women entrepreneurs through the training of trainers.

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

73. As part of its capacity-building programme with the Palestinian Authority and with the benefit of logistical support from UNDP, UNITAR carried out activities in the following areas: financial management and audit issues; management development programmes; and statistical training programmes. Assistance included the organization of local and regional workshops for 85 employees from a number of Palestinian Authority ministries. In addition, the Institute drafted a comprehensive report for the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for the development of a statistics training centre and related programmes and placed a technical consultant in taxation law within the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Finance. UNITAR is in the process of formulating capacity development programmes for 1998-1999 in management development training; statistics training; grass-roots training for economic and social development; and a joint UNITAR/UNDP training programme in financial management and auditing.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

74. The total number of refugees served by UNRWA in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 1,270,333; 545,577 of these were living in 27 refugee camps. UNRWA operates 385 facilities in the area and employs approximately 8,750 staff, over 98 per cent of whom are locally recruited Palestinians. The operational nature of the Agency's activities differs from that of other United Nations organizations, which for the most part work through the Palestinian Authority or local executing agencies.

75. In the education sector, UNRWA's 262 elementary and preparatory schools accommodated 188,588 pupils in the 1996/97 school year, an increase of 13,282 over the previous year. Despite progress in the construction and upgrading of schools, many operated on double shift, were accommodated in unsatisfactory rented premises or suffered from overcrowding. Owing to lack of funds, UNRWA remained unable to extend the basic education cycle in the West Bank from nine to 10 years, in accordance with reforms introduced by the Jordanian Ministry of Education and as requested by the Palestinian Authority. The Agency's four vocational and technical training centres provided a variety of programmes to 2,046 trainees. In addition to regular in-service training programmes, the Educational Sciences Faculty (ESF) at the Ramallah training centres offered pre-service and in-service teacher training leading to a first university degree for 600 trainees. In July 1996, the first group of ESF students graduated from the programme. The inability of Gaza students enrolled at West Bank training centres to obtain permits to attend courses led to the introduction of compensatory ESF classes in Gaza. Merit-based scholarships were awarded to 413 students for study at universities in the region. UNRWA's 1997 education budget for the West Bank and Gaza Strip was $70 million.

76. UNRWA's 1997 health budget for the West Bank and Gaza Strip was $31 million. The Agency operated 51 health facilities which handled 3.8 million patient visits in 1996. Rehabilitation services were provided through 12 physiotherapy clinics. In the Gaza Strip, UNRWA maternity units accounted for approximately one third of all refugee births. Secondary care was made

available to refugee patients through a combination of contractual agreements with non-governmental and private hospitals and partial reimbursement of treatment costs, and directly at UNRWA's 43-bed Qalqilia hospital in the West Bank. Environmental health services included sewage disposal, management of storm-water runoff, provision of safe drinking water, collection and disposal of refuse and control of insect and rodent infestation. Work continued on the 232-bed European Gaza Hospital, with a view to alleviating the serious shortage of hospital beds and adequate medical services in the Gaza Strip. Upon completion, the hospital will be handed over to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health. An affiliated Gaza College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences would help to provide qualified staff for the hospital.

77. In the relief and social services sector, UNRWA's special hardship programme provided direct material and financial assistance to 89,280 eligible refugees. Assistance provided under the programme included food rations and eligibility for shelter rehabilitation and poverty alleviation programmes, including a skills-training and apprenticeship project in the West Bank. UNRWA sponsored 24 women's programmes, 15 community rehabilitation and 27 youth activity centres, plus a rehabilitation centre for the visually impaired in Gaza. Promotion of community management and income-generating activities were key themes of the community centres' activities. UNRWA continued to operate a special after-school recreation programme to provide supervised extracurricular activities for Gaza schoolchildren. To address the hardship resulting from the extended closure of the Gaza Strip in 1996, UNRWA introduced an emergency job-creation programme which provided temporary employment to some 2,700 persons. The Agency's 1997 relief and social services budget for the West Bank and Gaza Strip was $19 million.

78. UNRWA continued implementation of its Peace Implementation Programme, an investment initiative launched in 1993 with the aim of making the results of the Middle East peace process felt at the local level. Through the programme, UNRWA sought to improve infrastructure, create employment and enhance socio-economic conditions within the Palestine refugee community in the Agency's five fields of operation. The programme enabled UNRWA to increase its expenditures dramatically so as to improve conditions in refugee communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, for which by May 1997 it had received a total of $179.5 million in earmarked pledges and contributions.

79. The Agency continued to operate an income-generation programme to create job opportunities and alleviate poverty by making credit available to small businesses and micro-enterprises through revolving loan funds established with project contributions. Established in 1991 in response to deteriorating socio-economic conditions and rising unemployment, the programme had by the end of 1996 provided a total of $12.7 million in loans at commercial interest rates to 4,327 enterprises, while achieving repayment rates approaching 100 per cent.

80. UNRWA continued to cooperate with and render assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Attention was devoted to harmonization of services between UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority, in the interests of standardizing programmes and services and contributing to the development of efficient self-reliant structures. In July 1996, UNRWA completed the move of its principal headquarters units to the Gaza Strip, in accordance with the decision of the

Secretary-General endorsed by the General Assembly. UNRWA's work in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continues to be affected by the continuing shortfalls in contributions to the Agency's regular budget since 1993. Those shortfalls, together with a series of austerity measures implemented in order to reduce deficits, have prevented UNRWA from expanding services at a rate commensurate with the growth in the registered refugee population and produced a deterioration in the quality of services provided. The Agency's operations are also being impeded by security-related measures imposed by the Israeli authorities, which place severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinians with local residency, including UNRWA staff.

Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO)

81. In addition to its support, outlined above, to the donor and United Nations coordination mechanisms, UNSCO continued to coordinate bilateral and multilateral training programmes for the Palestinian Police Force. The main objective has been to help transform international training efforts into a longer-term framework to enable the police force to undertake its own specialized training. During the reporting period, a joint formulation team produced a comprehensive project document for the establishment of a police academy for 400 students in Jericho and in 1996 31 training courses took place in the West Bank and Gaza. UNSCO provides support services to donors, including the facilitation and briefing of visiting missions and trainers as well as assisting in the monitoring, follow-up and evaluation of courses. Training courses are designed to meet needs identified by the Palestinian Police Force and expressed to the international community, through the Local Aid Coordination Committee Sector Working Group on the Police, for which UNSCO serves as secretariat.

82. In June 1996, an Economic and Social Monitoring Unit was initiated to provide donor country representatives, United Nations agencies and Palestinian Authority agencies with analyses of general economic and social conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip through quarterly reports on economic and social conditions. A legal adviser was appointed in late 1996 to coordinate the development of the rule of law sector, through the preparation and distribution of appropriate documents and the facilitation of consultation within the sector. In addition, a "Directory of non-governmental organizations in the Gaza Strip" and a "Directory of non-governmental organizations in donor countries: assistance to the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" were published in early 1997, to provide information, in Arabic and English, on all non-governmental organizations operating in the Gaza Strip as well as approximately 180 international organizations in donor countries. The aim was to provide local Palestinian NGOs with an overview of international non-governmental organizations working in their area so as to assist them in forging links and facilitating fund-raising. A similar project is being planned for non-governmental organizations in the West Bank.

Universal Postal Union (UPU)

83. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, UPU has developed a programme of cooperation with the Palestinian Authority aimed at enhancing the human and technical resource capacity of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication.

Within the framework of this overall strategy, UPU has been implementing a project through which postal employees have received training, and postal equipment has been provided to the central administration of the Ministry.

World Food Programme (WFP)

84. The World Food Programme has been providing assistance to the Palestinian non-refugee population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since September 1991. Beginning in 1994, WFP has concentrated its efforts in the Gaza Strip and has been emphasizing poverty alleviation and social relief interventions aimed at the most severe hardship cases among the non-refugee population. WFP assistance currently reaches some 16 per cent of the total Gaza non-refugee population, approximately 50,000 people.

85. WFP's completed work in the reporting period included support to hardship cases and support for the rehabilitation of post-conflict victims in the Gaza Strip. The major share of WFP's assistance under this programme is aimed at supporting the social safety net scheme of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The scheme targets approximately 50,000 needy persons registered as special hardship cases, over 65 per cent of whom are women heads of household. WFP aid addresses the urgent food security needs of such households, constituting an appreciable and inflation-free input for beneficiaries. Beginning in September 1996, a technical assistance component of the project allocated funding to provide one-year in-service training to 10 newly recruited social workers. An additional 20 women from low-income households, not registered as special hardship cases, are volunteers assisting project staff in the distribution of food commodities.

86. The World Food Programme also assists local organizations active in health and social welfare. It provides non-governmental organizations with food aid to supplement their operating budgets, allowing them to hire and retain needed staff and volunteers. It also runs a food-for-training project targeting 1,000 youth in the seven training centres and two rehabilitation centres for the blind and visually impaired run by the Ministry of Social Affairs. WFP has also been supporting a pilot project targeting some 500 households of small-scale fishermen and landless farmers, providing food aid against a cash payment equivalent to 30 per cent of the local market value of the donated commodities. The aim of the project is to increase the household food security of the targeted group and to establish a project fund for the purchase of agricultural inputs, in support of fisheries and post-harvesting activities, and for community development.

World Health Organization (WHO)

87. Having supported the Ministry of Health during the period of the transfer of responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority, WHO is now cooperating with the Ministry in strengthening the Palestinian health system. During the period of comprehensive closure in 1996, WHO assisted the Ministry in complying with the MECACAR (Mediterranean, Caucasus and Central Asian Republics) initiative of polio eradication in the region by urgently procuring 1.2 million doses of poliomyelitis vaccine for its polio immunization campaign. The procurement and delivery of expensive vaccines for the expanded programme of immunization (EPI)

campaign and of cold-chain equipment is also being implemented by emergency donation. This donation will assist the Ministry in carrying out its programme of school immunization, controlling hepatitis B and preventing the spread of communicable diseases such as meningitis influenza to certain high-risk groups. A review of EPI surveillance was also carried out and recommendations made to improve the overall quality of the EPI programme.

88. Attention is also being directed at the strengthening of the public health system. The Public Health Laboratory in the Gaza Strip has been equipped with needed technology and WHO has fielded a mission to define the legal framework for the operation of a proposed Central Public Health Laboratory in the West Bank, as well as assessing the necessity of reviewing existing public health legislation. Other missions proposed ways of strengthening Ministry of Health's policies and addressing neglected critical health issues, assessed nutritional policies, proposed ways of strengthening the capabilities of the Ministry of Health to address the emerging problem of malnutrition, as well as improving the Ministry's capacity to deal with nutritional issues related to epidemiological transmission. A review of major public health programmes was also undertaken with the Ministry of Health with the aim of developing a project proposal for strengthening the Ministry's capabilities in this area. This included a review of maternal and child health activities, the tuberculosis programme, the diabetes control programme and brucellosis control. A team of consultants cooperated with Bir Zeit University to establish the first diploma course in primary health care, designed to upgrade the training of health-care personnel and to familiarize health workers with modern procedures. A full-time consultant has been provided to the Department of Community Health at Bir Zeit University to assist in developing the curriculum for a diploma course in public health care.

89. In order to rationalize the drug sector, WHO is assisting the Ministry of Health in conducting a drug situation analysis and in developing policies aimed at improving the provision and availability of affordable, high-quality drugs and promoting their rational use. Together with UNDP, the organization also provided support to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture in detailing the Palestinian Programme for the Control of Brucellosis. In addition, in order to devise an agreed framework for health-sector development for the West Bank and Gaza Strip and to identify public investment initiatives, WHO is cooperating with the World Bank and the Ministry of Health in drawing up a sectoral review outlining development strategies for the health sector for the medium term. The review will assist the Ministry of Health in developing the National Health Plan. WHO is also providing the assistance of a full-time consultant to develop the National Health Plan.

ANNEX

United Nations departments, programmes and agencies active in the occupied territories

	Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division
	Department for Development Support and Management Services
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCO	Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization